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UNCLAS AMMAN 007530

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: JORDANIAN DAILY ERRONEOUSLY LINKS USAID WITH
NARCOTICS SMUGGLING; PROTEST REGISTERED

REF: AMMAN 6576

1. (U) The new Jordanian daily newspaper Al Ghad has acknowledged its editing staff erred on September 7 by running a photo of a crate bearing the USAID logo and a supposed pile of illegal narcotics alongside a lengthy article about drug smuggling operations between Iraq and Jordan. The black and white photo carried the caption "seized drugs," but the paper's editor-in-chief admitted to IO that the picture did not have any relation to the story and was in fact a file photo from the paper's archives. The editor apologized for the error, which he insists was inadvertent. Meanwhile, an official with the GOJ Anti-Narcotics Unit told us that he doubted the materials shown in the photo were narcotics in any case. As best as post can determine, the grain photo actually portrays a crate of peanuts being emptied. The editor promised to acknowledge the error in print, and Charge has written a letter to the editor for publication that strongly protests the error.

2. (U) Comment: We are not convinced this was an innocent mistake. The photo may reinforce one of the article's underlying messages, which is that drug smuggling was not an issue for Jordan until the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

3. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

HALE